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THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

SIN has wrought variance between God and man. It has broken the bond that fastened them together, and made distance where before there was nearness, estrangement where before there was friendship and peace. Such and so terrible is the evil of sin; so ruinous its nature; so great its power.

It was the *law* that gave to sin this separating, alienating power. It was the *law* that enabled sin to break the peace between God and man. For the law said, "There can be no peace between the holy and the unholy; there can only be enmity and war." Such and so awful is the holiness of the law; so perfect its nature; so vast its power.

How then shall this awful law be persuaded to forego its claims, or allow the righteous and the unrighteous to come together?—How shall the ruined peace between God and man be recovered, and the broken friendship restored? How shall the king and his revolting subjects be reconciled, and yet the law of the realm stand firm? How shall God say to the law-breaking rebel, "Come, enter into friendship with me?"

If it was sin, then, that made us "out of peace" with God, we can only be made to be at peace with Him through the taking away of that which came between us and God. No other way would have been sufficient, or right, or honorable to God. Peace given us in any other way would have been false and insecure. It would not have satisfied us, and it could not last.

God has taken the one true and blessed way of making peace. He has taken out of the way that which made peace impossible. He has sent His Son to bear away the great hindrance. That Son has come, and taken sin upon Him, though He had no sin of his own. He has allowed the law to seize upon Him, and condemn Him, as if he were the sinner. He has borne everything that we should have borne, and done everything that we should have done. Thus the law has been wondrously honored by His obedience and suffering: it has not only been shewn to be "holy, and just and good," but far more holy and just and good than it was ever seen to be before. This Divine obeyor of the law, and bearer of its penalties, and answerer of its claims, has done far more to honor the law than we had done to dishonour it. Had

the law kept hold of us for all eternity, and pressed its awful claims, it could not have gotten half so much satisfaction as it has done, by the one obedience and endurance of the Son of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ having done all this in the sinner's stead, the law has no right nor power to insist upon its claims being answered by us in our own persons. These claims, no doubt remain the same, for the law changes not in one jot or tittle; it remains the same terrible and inexorable law; but then one has been found able to take all these claims upon himself, and meet them to the full.

Thus the law is honored, righteousness is satisfied, God is glorified; and all in a way which provides for the removal of that sin which stood between the sinner and God. Thus the sinner's pardon is made truly a righteous thing; an act of justice as entirely as it is an act of grace. The sinner's salvation does more for the honor of God and of His law than his condemnation could have done. And all the reasons that might once have been urged for his being condemned, may now be urged with far greater force for his being forgiven.

This is the foundation which God has laid for our peace.—Surely it is deep, and broad, and sure enough, to bear the load that is laid upon it. For thus it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. xxviii. 16.)

All this having been done, God now "preaches *peace* to us through Jesus Christ." And from the way in which it has been brought about, we are assured that it is a peace that will stand. However violently it may be assaulted, it will not give way. It is not a peace which we have still to "make," as many seem to suppose, when they say to a dying man, "Make your peace with God." It is a peace already made—made by God, through the work of His Son on Calvary—"Having made *peace* through the blood of his cross" (Col. i. 20.) "The chastisement of our *peace* was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5). It is this finished peace that God is now making known to the sons of men. And hence He is called the "God of peace," and the gospel which He has given us to preach is called the "gospel of peace"—that is, the good news of a peace which God has made, a peace which he holds out to us so freely, that in simply believing the good news concerning it, we get at once the peace which they contain.

Hence the apostle prayed, in behalf of the brethren at Rome, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and *peace* in believing" (Rom. xv. 13). Hence, in another part of the same epistle, he set forth the ground on which they stood—"Being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And hence he prayed in behalf of the Thessalonian brethren.

"The Lord of *peace* give you *peace* always, by all means" (2 Thess. iii. 16).

In the Lord Jesus, then, as the atoning one, the mediating one, the reconciling one, we have peace. "He is our *peace*," says the apostle. He is the "Prince of *peace*," says the prophet; and again, "The chastisement of our *peace* was upon him." "I will reveal to them," says Jehovah, "the abundance of *peace*;" and again, "The work of righteousness shall be *peace*, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever;" and again, "I will make with them a covenant of *peace*;" and again, "In this place will I give *peace*." The good news announced in the angelic song was, "On earth *peace*, good-will toward men."—Nay, in looking forward to the birth of this great Peace-maker, thus the aged Zacharias sang: "Thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of *peace*."

Such, then, are the good news of the Divine Peace-maker and His peace-making work. All that was needful for the securing of our peace has been finished by Him on the cross. There is no part of our peace that requires still to be made. That which remains for us is not to *make* our peace, but to *receive* the divinely-made peace of the great Reconciler. The knowledge of Him, and of what He has done, is all we need for the obtaining and preserving of peace in our souls.

In the "gospel of peace" God comes to us declaring the provision which has been made for effecting reconciliation with Himself. He tells us that there is no longer any reason why we should be afraid of Him, or stand aloof from Him, as if He were our great enemy. The reasons that existed for this dread have been taken out of the way. The character in which he has revealed Himself is such as to invite, not repel, us. The name He takes to Himself—"the God of peace," "Jehovah-shalom"—is such as is fitted to win our confidence, and make us feel how safe the sinner is in coming back to God, and intrusting to Him his all for eternity. The sending of the Son as the Peace-maker shews us how truly his thoughts toward us were thoughts of peace. The giving us the Holy Spirit to reveal to us this Peace-maker and His blessed work of propitiation, shews how bent He is on carrying into effect these thoughts of peace. His reconciling so many thousands of enemies in ages past, shews us that he is resolved that the peace-making blood shall not be shed in vain, and that men shall see how thoroughly it can do its work of bringing back the sinner to Himself, of casting out fear, and of producing love and trust. His many-words of gracious welcome shew us how earn-

estly He presses upon us the reconciliation of his covenant of peace—"Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

In preaching to us the good news of peace, He is pressing upon us still the same proposals of grace. He will not let us rest. He knows that distance from Him is misery, and that enmity to Him is the very essence of hell; and, therefore, He is desirous that we should return and be at peace with him. He knows that there is no cure for the soul's many maladies; nor rest from the soul's many troubles, save in friendship with Himself; and, therefore, He entreats us to be reconciled, and become His friends. He knows the infinite blessings of fellowship with Himself; the deep and wondrous joy that there is in His love; and, therefore, He ceases not to ply us with every argument that might persuade us to come and share this gladness. "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

The gospel of peace, when it comes to us, does not ask for any previous goodness or preparedness in us, as if it were only designed for a better class of sinners. It takes us just as it finds us, and addresses us as such. It finds us out of peace, and, as "the gospel of peace," it makes known its tidings of peace. It holds out its olive-branch, and says, "Be reconciled to God." It finds us far off—it seeks to bring us nigh; it finds us aliens—it seeks to make us sons!

And as this gospel of peace first brings peace into the soul by its glad tidings, so does it preserve that peace unto the end. Its news of peace come ever fresh to us, dropping down on us like the evening dew, or carrying light into our hearts like the morning sunshine. It brings to us fresh news of peace each day, from the God of peace; and out of the fulness of the covenant of peace, it is ever pouring into us new streams of peace. "Peace like a river," is our portion even here. We do not say to our souls, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." We speak peace to ourselves, because God has spoken peace to us through the cross, where peace was made; and from which, as from a fountain, peace continues to flow to us. That cannot be false peace which comes *straight to us from the cross*. The closer and more direct that our dealings are with the cross of the Peace-maker, the more true and sure will be our peace. It will be "a peace that passeth all understanding." It will realize to us continually the promise of the "Lord of peace" when leaving the earth, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

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